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❖THE❖OLD❖TESTAMENT❖STUDENT.❖

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NO. I.

WITH the present volume a new feature begins, viz., the New Testament studies contained in the "Supplement." In undertaking this new department, THE STUDENT does not in any sense lose sight of its original purpose. The simple fact is that the advocacy of the inductive method of Bible-study is as much a part of the work of THE STUDENT as is the advocacy of the study of the Old Testament. In furtherance, therefore, of this kind of Bible-study, the New Testament lessons are furnished. The interest already manifested in them is sufficient ground for the feeling that no mistake has been made in this new departure.

WE trust that our readers will not pass by the "Word-Studies" of Dr. Nordell as seeming too critical. They have been prepared for those whose study of the Bible is restricted to the English translation. They are, however, *studies*, and will scarcely be appreciated if given only a reading. Similar "studies" on groups of important words will be published in successive numbers of THE STUDENT. Shall they not have the attention they deserve?

THE eighth year of the Hebrew Summer Schools is rapidly nearing its close. The sessions of 1888 have, taken together, greatly surpassed those of any preceding year. The early date of the New England School (May 22-June 14) interfered to some extent with the attendance; for at that time the colleges were still in session. But the Philadelphia School was much larger and better than ever before, while the attendance at Chautauqua was three times as large as during any

preceding summer. The Chicago School is at this writing just opening with over one hundred students. The change of the Southern School from the University of Virginia to Atlanta, Ga., was for this year very unfortunate. The announcement of the change was made so late as to injure greatly the efficiency of the School. But that the change was, everything considered, a wise one, no one acquainted with the facts will deny. The average attendance at the five Northern Schools has been sixty.

It has always been one of the embarrassments of New Testament study that we have so little contemporary literature. Excepting the writings of the New Testament, our Christian literature, speaking broadly, does not date back beyond the second century. How interesting it would be if a learned Jew had written an account of Jesus' life, or if some Greek historian had given us a narrative of the spread of Christianity in Asia Minor and Greece. Such literature would doubtless throw a valuable light upon many New Testament statements and give us interesting information at some points which the New Testament does not supply. We have no such literature. The cultured heathen world did not consider Jesus and his religion sufficiently important to occupy their minds with its study or their pens with a description of it.

We are not left wholly ignorant, however, of the thought-environment of the New Testament as it existed in the Jewish world. The Talmudic literature, which covers a period of several centuries, including the New Testament times, contains the current religious thought to which the New Testament writers had been accustomed and from which their convictions and prejudices, which only gradually wore away, were formed. It has been felt in recent years that special interest and importance attach to this literature as forming a kind of background to the New Testament and aiding in a knowledge of some of its expressions and especially of some of the conceptions of the early disciples which Jesus had to labor gradually to correct. Among recent works on the Talmud, that of Weber (*Die Lehren des Talmud*) deservedly holds high rank. We present to the readers of THE STUDENT a series of four articles upon "The Eschatology of the Talmud" prepared by Professor Stevens and based upon Weber's researches. It is believed that, while they will show how much is crude and fanciful in Jewish theology, they will at the same time disclose the roots of some of the ideas which meet us in the New Testament, and par-

ticularly that they will make it clear why the early disciples could not understand the spiritual mission and kingdom of Jesus, or bring themselves to believe that he would suffer death. The articles which follow in subsequent numbers will bear especially upon these points.

Bible-listening! There is much of it. It is of value; it is better than nothing. It is easy; many enjoy it. We find it in our churches, in our Sunday-schools, in our schools and colleges. Some imagine it to be *Bible-study*; some even so call it. But the mistake is great. The sad fact is that, in the case of many who so deceive themselves, *Bible-study* is becoming a thing unknown, well-nigh a thing impossible. *Bible-listening* has become a bane. Who will measure the evil it has done? Who, the evil it is doing?

Bible-reading! There is very considerable of this. It is of more value than *Bible-listening*. It may not be as easy; it may not be as enjoyable; but it is more profitable. And yet, how profitable is it? Are we not satisfying ourselves with the less? Are we not neglecting larger possibilities? Have we not, in many directions and in many cases, much *Bible-reading* that is called *Bible-study*? that is really thought to be such? The evil is not in the reading of the Bible; it is in the fact that we do not call things by their right names.

Bible-study! There is very little. Many who talk about it have never met with it, or have not recognized it. What is it? The way to find out is not to study a definition, but to become acquainted in experience with the fact. When one can clearly distinguish, in one's own practice, between *Bible-listening*, *Bible-reading*, and *Bible-study*, then probably one has begun to become acquainted with the last.

Bible-study stands in direct relation to *Bible-listening* and *Bible-reading*. It fits one to do either with profit, with intelligence and Christian judgment. It prepares the congregation to listen to expository preaching, the Sunday-school scholar to consider the lesson in company with the teacher with interest and independence of thought. Especially, it prepares the scholar and student in our institutions of learning for proper *Bible-listening* and *Bible-reading* throughout life. How often we sacrifice the lasting good to the apparent edification of the moment! Shall we do less *Bible-listening* and less *Bible-reading* that we may do more *Bible-study*? Shall we do more *Bible-study* that we may listen and read the better and the longer?